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SERIOUS OBJECTIONS TO THE USE OF THE EXPERIMENTAL MINNOW PONDS
AT DRAYTON PLAINS HATCHERY

On June 27 experimental pond No. 4 at the Drayton Plains Hatchery was drained in order to transfer the stock of adult golden shiners to several other ponds for experimental bass studies. Upon draining, 152 shiners were taken, which caused me to assume that a considerable number of minnows has been seined out by parties unknown. This assumption is based upon the following:

1. More than 850 adult golden shiners have been placed in this pond during the last two months (250 less than two weeks ago). No dead minnows had been observed for the past month. Bird predation is at a minimum. I had figured on having in the neighborhood of 750 to 800 shiners in this pond.

2. At this time of the year golden shiners travel in schools. All of the shiners in this pond had been observed on all occasions in one large school between 5 and 6 feet in diameter. This would make it an extremely simple matter to remove the shiners. The weeds in this pond were not very thick except at the inlet, yet they were thick enough to allow some shiners to escape from a seine.

3. The fish in this pond were fed last on June 23, and at this time the school was judged to contain around 700 to 800 fish.

4. I wasn't able to be at the hatchery on the 24th. On the 25th and 26th of June the wind was blowing hard and I was unable to see the fish. On the morning of the 27th, while draining the pond, I judged that the

school contained around 100 fish.

5. There was no evidence (weeds being down) on Monday to lead me to believe that anyone had seined in the pond the night before.

6. I talked with a reliable minnow dealer at Drayton Flains who claimed that he had noticed about a thousand golden shiners in a certain minnow dealer's tank in Drayton Flains several days before. He claimed that this minnow dealer wasn't to be trusted.

7. I visited several minnow dealers and found one who was said, by his son, to have made an unusual seining trip at midnight once last week. This man had a selection of fishes that was similar to those carried in various ponds at the hatchery.

All of the minnows that were hatched last year were placed in one pond this year. They have steadily decreased in numbers. On several occasions I have noticed that the weeds in the pond had been knocked down from seining.

The following factors also make it difficult to carry on a series of controlled experiments at Drayton Flains:

1. The Clinton River, one source of water supply, is filled with many species of game fishes. During the spawning seasons of these fishes it is impossible, at present, to allow any water to flow into the ponds, because the small fry are able to get through the inlet screens. It would not be practical to put finer meshed screen on the inlet, because it is so easy for them to become plugged by algae, etc. It is desirable at times to be able to turn a small stream of river water into certain ponds to help control the temperature.

2. The spring creek. During the past winter a flood mixed the fishes in all ponds, making it impossible under existing conditions to winter fish in these ponds.

The minnow dealer above Drayton who taps the spring water supply causes considerable disease in the pond fishes. He has been asked on several occasions to remove the dead fishes from his tanks. On June 27, when I visited his place of business, I noticed several hundred dead minnows in his tanks. It is undesirable in fish cultural work to have the water supply contaminated. This minnow dealer serves as a continual source, because he places minnows in his tanks from all sections of the state.

Because the ponds are so near the road they tend to attract many visitors. This is undesirable in many ways. In many instances shingles that have been placed in the banks of several of the ponds for fish to spawn on have been pulled out by inquisitive people. People are always poking around the ponds for frogs or tadpoles for bait. Last summer three maximum-minimum thermometers that were well hidden were stolen.

It would be desirable to place a high fence around the ponds. This would be expensive and of doubtful value, as we would still have our difficulties with the water supply.

The difficulties listed above prevent our using these ponds for quantitative minnow propagation studies at the present time, but these ponds are still usable for certain forage experiments.

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